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Few Americans have visited Namibia, otherwise known as Southwest Africa. Having just returned from there, I have a new understanding of the strategic and economic necessity governing our relationships with that corner of the world. Namibia, like much of southern Africa, is a treasure of minerals essential to any modern industrial society.

We must have access to such resources in order to remain economically viable and to continue to enjoy our advanced standard of living. The Soviet Union has a vested interest, therefore, in denying such access to us. The South Africa government plays a major role in determining the shape of Namibia's future, and this colors the glass through which Western eyes view this area.

The residue of guilt left over from more than a century of colonialism constitutes a massive burden for the West. Apartheid compels Western press to scourge South Africa, and Western public opinion on South Africa is largely negative because of this barrage of coverage.

This in turn plays into the hands of the Soviet Union, which adeptly manipulates the media, playing on the West's conscience and guilt. This brings all South African initiatives, including those on Namibia, into disrepute. Combined with support of "wars of national liberation," this effort constitutes a significant threat to non-communist control of this part of the world.

The Soviet bloc, the Organization of African Unity, and the United Nations all support the Namibian version of a Third World revolutionary movement — South West Africa People's Organization. SWAPO seeks to deny legitimacy to any other attempts to create a free government in Namibia, particularly

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Namibia does matter to the West

any effort commanding South African support.

SWAPO, like so many other similar Third World movements, is Marxist-oriented and armed by the Soviets.

Whenever anyone questions SWAPO or attempts to assist the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), they are assailed in the world press as racists and fascists. Regrettably, too few Western journalists see SWAPO for what it really is, a Marxist-led terrorist organization. Too few see DTA as a multiracial, popular-based movement, seeking to form a government to represent all the people of Namibia.

The United Nations, ever eager to harm the West and aid the Soviets and their Third World allies, has recognized SWAPO as Namibia's de facto government. It wishes to supervise any election. Sadly, supporters of Western government and Western-style democracy are willing to go along with this.

There are other misconceptions about Namibia. Because SWAPO stems from the Ovambo tribe, representing about half the population, SWAPO wants observers to believe they are the majority political party. This is not true, and would be definitively proven in any free and fair election.

Another misconception holds that because Namibia is presently under South African political control, South African racial policies govern there. This is also untrue. In 1979, the elected national assembly abolished racial discrimination. Legislation exists providing equal pay for equal work, irrespective of race. Trade union membership is open to all, as are all residential

areas. Education is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 16. DTA presided over these reforms, and constitutes the first true multiracial party in modern African history.

DTA is confident it can win a fair and free election now. But it is leery of the United Nations playing a supervisory role in such an election, legitimately fearful that U.N. forces will allow SWAPO abuses. SWAPO has already killed two past presidents of DTA. Intimidation, torture and murder are its chosen methods. We must understand this clearly in order to play a role that will guarantee a result favorable to the West.

Recently, Secretary of State Shultz met with the head of SWAPO. He should extend the same courtesy to DTA Chairman Dirk Mudge.

It is vital that Americans not shrug off Namibia. The Soviet effort to destabilize that area of Africa has already created economic and social chaos. Several Marxist regimes in that area preside over economic catastrophe, and are casting covetous eyes in the direction of America. They want our financial aid, aid which they know will not be forthcoming from the Soviet Union.

Russia will pour weapons into any Third World country where there is a prospect of revolution. But they cannot and will not do a thing to turn those countries' economies around so they may benefit the poor people of such nations.

The Soviets seek political domination and destabilization of that area, with us paying the bill. Then they will exercise their political leverage to deny us access to the raw materials while maximizing their strategic, geographical and military advantages.

For these reasons, we must support those movements which, while admittedly imperfect in terms of pure democracy, are essentially Western-oriented. To do otherwise is to contribute to our own downfall.